

# San Simeon State Park



## Our Mission

The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

GRAY DAVIS  
Governor

MARY D. NICHOLS  
Secretary for Resources

RUTH COLEMAN  
Acting Director, California State Parks



California State Parks does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities. Prior to arrival, visitors with disabilities who need assistance should contact the park at the phone number below. To receive this publication in an alternate format, write to the Communications Office at the following address.

**CALIFORNIA  
STATE PARKS**  
**P. O. Box 942896**  
**Sacramento, CA**  
**94296-0001**

For information call:  
800-777-0369  
916-653-6995, outside the U.S.  
711, TTY relay service

[www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)

**San Simeon State Park**  
**San Simeon Creek Road**  
**Cambria, CA 93452**  
**(805) 927-2035**

*San Simeon State Park is  
a beautiful meeting of  
land and sea, with cliffs,  
rocky tongues and  
churning waters.*

**S**an Simeon State Park's two miles of inviting coastline lie 35 miles north of San Luis Obispo. Its location along scenic Highway 1 frames shoreline vistas of sandy beaches and rocky promontories, as well as a magnificent view inland toward the Santa Lucia Mountains. The park has outstanding examples of Monterey pine forest, as well as the more typical central coast seashore and riparian habitats. The community of Cambria, two miles south, offers a convenient variety of services, including markets, antique shops and restaurants.

The weather averages a daytime high of 69 degrees with an evening low temperature of 42 degrees, all year long. Rain occurs primarily in winter and averages about four-and-a-half inches per month. Spring and summer are pleasant during the day and become cool in the early evening as the fog layer moves inland from the ocean.

### PARK HISTORY

San Simeon State Park, one of the oldest units of the California State Park System, was a rancheria during the mission era when it served as a coastal access point for goods shipped to and from Monterey's Mission San Antonio. The present Washburn Day-use Area was a gravel quarry until the late 1920s. The State purchased more than 500 acres of beach and inland parcels from local ranchers, and in 1932 the park was established.

### HUMAN HISTORY

Native Americans inhabited this area as early as 8,000 years ago. These people were great storytellers and recorded much of their history in an oral tradition. They enjoyed all types of games, gambling and active sports. Music provided recreational listening and had important religious significance. They hunted deer and other woodland animals, and gathered and ground acorns from native oak trees. They were known for their beautiful coiled baskets, which were desirable among the many tribes who traded with them. The women made baskets for nearly every imaginable purpose—from purely functional to those with great religious significance. Because personal belongings were believed to gather power as time elapsed, it was customary to bury them with the individual who had owned them for use in the afterlife. For this reason Native American sites here at San Simeon—including the Pa-Nu Cultural Preserve—are protected, and actual locations are not divulged. If you wish to learn more about the Native Americans of this area, visit the Morro Bay State Park Museum of Natural History and the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.

*California  
least tern*



### WILDLIFE

San Simeon State Park offers visitors the opportunity to view a wide range of wildlife in their natural surroundings. Natural preserves protect some outstanding and varied examples of wildlife habitat.

Visitors may see coastal black-tail deer, bobcats, coyotes, brush rabbits, gopher snakes and California ground squirrels. The park is also habitat for the endangered California red-legged frog, steelhead trout and southwestern pond turtle. In winter months large numbers of monarch butterflies take refuge in the park's Monterey pines.

For bird watching enthusiasts, the park shelters a large variety of species. At the beach you will see birds such as brown pelicans, gulls, terns, snowy plovers and sandpipers. In spring the blue breeding pouches of cormorants are eye-catching.

Further inland hawks and turkey vultures soar overhead. Magnificent great blue herons as well as egrets, mallards, cinnamon teal,







*Leffingwell Landing Day-use Area*

harriers, killdeer, goldfinches and kingfishers are plentiful. Red-shouldered and red-tailed hawks, kestrels, western bluebirds, quail, great horned owls and the western meadowlark inhabit the plateau at Washburn Primitive Campground.

In October gray whales begin their migration southward, passing the park between November and March. You can spot sea otters all year long just offshore. Adventurous visitors can encounter a variety of intertidal creatures, including turban snails, sea stars and limpets, in the rocks along the shoreline at low tides. Please remember that laws protect these animals, and we ask you not to remove them from their native habitat.

### **MONTEREY BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY**

San Simeon State Park abuts the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, which covers 350 miles of coastline from San Francisco to Cambria. The sanctuary, managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), is the largest and deepest in the United States. National Marine Sanctuaries protect natural and cultural resources and help us satisfy our need for beauty, wonder, recreation and sustenance. The sanctuary encourages such activities as boating, fishing, whale watching, kayaking, diving and surfing. From December to March, northern elephant seals and their pups provide a magnificent show north of Hearst Castle®. Please park and view in posted wildlife viewing areas.

Some activities in the Marine Sanctuary are prohibited or strictly regulated. Ask for a brochure at the campground entrance station or visit their Web site at [www.mbnms.nos.noaa.gov](http://www.mbnms.nos.noaa.gov).

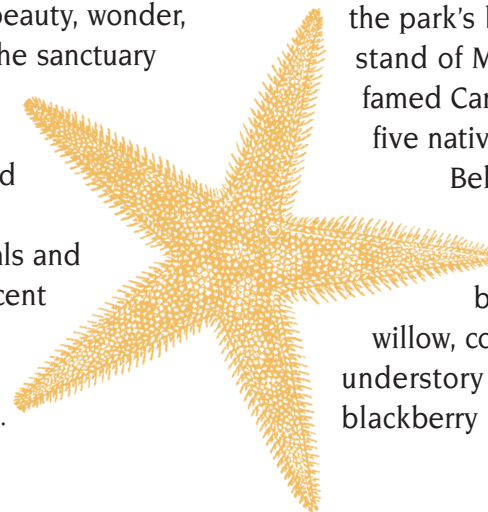


*Moonstone Beach Boardwalk*

### **PLANT COMMUNITIES**

Typical among the park's diverse natural features are creeks, seasonal wetlands, Monterey pine forest, riparian woodlands, coastal scrub and grasslands. One of the park's botanical highlights is a stand of Monterey pines, part of the famed Cambria pines and one of only five native groves left in the world.

Below the pines is a lush riparian area. A boardwalk crosses a boggy lowland filled with willow, cottonwood, and a thick understory of wax myrtle and blackberry bushes.



## RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

### Boating

Boating and kayaking are popular activities along the coast. Leffingwell Landing Day-use Area and William Randolph Hearst Memorial State Beach allow easy access to hand-launch watercraft. Surf conditions can change rapidly, so use caution at all times. Personal motorized watercraft are not allowed in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

### Fishing

Fishing off the public pier at William Randolph Hearst Memorial State Beach does not require a fishing license. Anglers can pull in barred surf perch all year long, but concentrations increase in December and January. Rainbow, rubberlip and walleye perch are common, and in late summer three kinds of croakers add to the action. Surf fishing is permitted with a valid California fishing license. For current information, refer to California Fish and Game regulations, or access their Web site at [www.dfg.ca.gov](http://www.dfg.ca.gov). Both San Simeon and Santa Rosa Creeks are closed to fishing most of the year.

### Camping

With two campgrounds, this 541-acre park provides the closest camping to Hearst Castle. San Simeon Creek Campground has 134 developed sites for tent camping



*San Simeon Creek Campground*

or recreational vehicles no more than 35 feet long. Each site has a fire ring and picnic table, and water spigots are available throughout the campground. Restrooms have flush toilets and coin-operated showers. A dump station, recycling bins, and pay phones are also available. The camp host sells firewood. Please burn only firewood purchased at the campground, as transporting wood can spread pine pitch canker and sudden oak death.

The Washburn Primitive Campground has 68 hilltop campsites approximately one mile inland from the beach. Each of these sites, reachable from the entrance kiosk at San Simeon Creek Campground, is furnished with a fire ring and picnic table. Water faucets and vault toilets are available nearby.

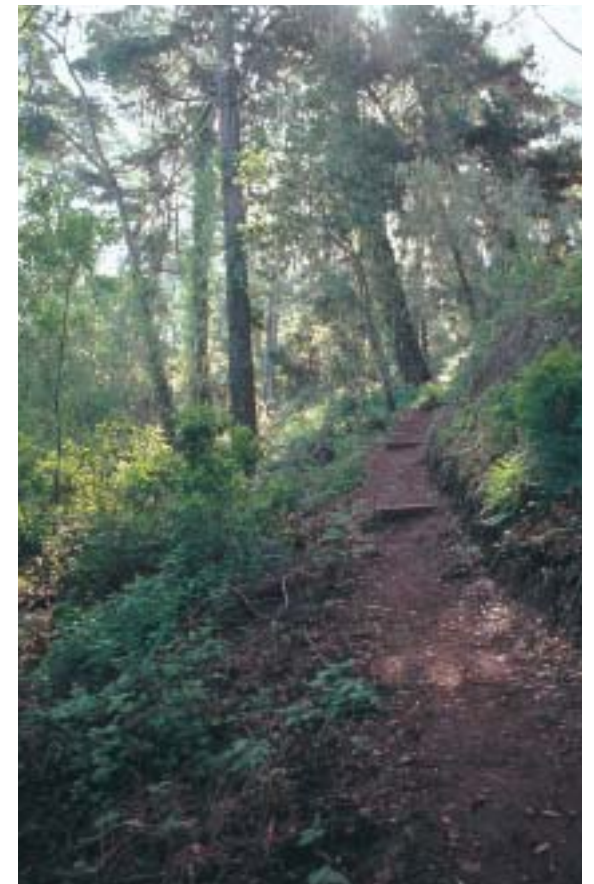
From mid-March to the end of September, advance camping reservations

are highly recommended. To make reservations call (800) 444-7275. During the rest of the year, camping is available first-come, first-served.

### Hiking

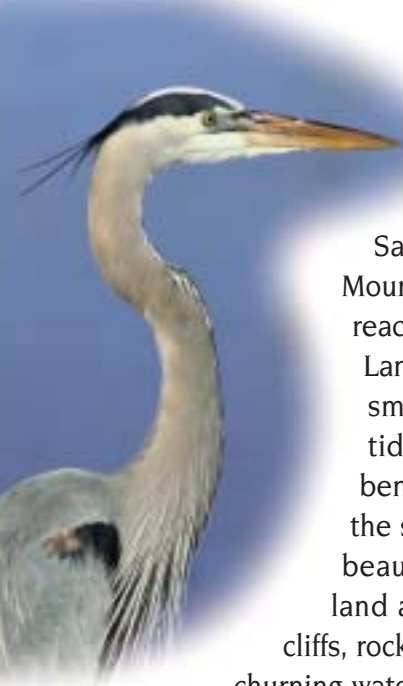
A 3.3 mile trail runs through the park. It offers a number of route variations, including scenic overlooks, rest-stop benches and interpretive panels with information on wildlife and habitat.

Hikers may be rewarded with occasional glimpses of Hearst Castle, as well as pastoral slopes and the unspoiled beauty of the southern



*San Simeon Nature Trail*





*Great blue  
heron*

Santa Lucia Mountains. Hikers reaching Leffingwell Landing will find a small knoll and a tidepool area, with benches overlooking the shore. It is a beautiful meeting of land and sea, with cliffs, rocky tongues and churning waters.

The California Conservation Corps, in collaboration with California State Parks, has created the Moonstone Beach Boardwalk, an accessible trail with benches along the way for relaxing and enjoying the view. The trail protects the delicate bluffs from damaging foot traffic. Beginning at Leffingwell Landing Boat Launch, it extends a full mile along Moonstone Beach Drive to Santa Rosa Beach.

## PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Activities start or take place at the campfire center. Check the entrance

station and bulletin boards for program subjects and schedules.

### Junior Rangers

Junior Rangers (age 7 through 12) learn about nature and the people of the past on special walks and through participation in other fun activities. The Junior Ranger Cubs is a nature program designed especially for children age 3 through 6.

### Campfire Programs

Campfire programs have a long tradition in California State Parks, and you are encouraged to keep that tradition alive. Throughout the summer the one-hour evening campfire programs are scheduled regularly at the campfire center in San Simeon Creek Campground. Programs vary each week but usually feature singing, storytelling, an interpretive slide program and some good old-fashioned fun. Dress warmly and bring along a flashlight to help you find your way back to camp.



*San Simeon Creek Boardwalk*

## ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

- Nature walks and hands-on programs (available to groups upon request)
- Campsites in both San Simeon Creek and Washburn Campgrounds
- Restrooms and showers in the San Simeon Creek Campground
- A portion of the trail along the seasonal wetland near San Simeon Campground, and the Moonstone Beach Boardwalk

## NEARBY STATE PARKS

- William Randolph Hearst Memorial State Beach, on Highway 1 north of San Simeon (805) 927-2068/2035
- Morro Strand State Beach, two miles south of Cayucos on Highway 1 (805) 772-7434
- Morro Bay State Park, in Morro Bay (805) 772-7434
- Hearst Castle®, north of San Simeon on Highway 1 (805) 927-2000

This park is supported in part through a nonprofit organization. For more information contact:

Friends of Hearst Castle  
700 Hearst Castle Road  
San Simeon, CA 93452-9740  
(805) 927-2138

[www.friendsofhearstcastle.org](http://www.friendsofhearstcastle.org)

## PLEASE REMEMBER

- **Wildlife**—For your own safety as well as that of the wildlife, please do not feed any animals.
- **Fishing**—Watch for irregular waves and a strong backwash that can sweep you off your feet.
- **Hunting/Firearms**—Hunting is not permitted in San Simeon State Park. Possession of a firearm is prohibited.
- **Trails**—To avoid poison oak, ticks and damage to the natural habitat, hikers and wildlife watchers must remain on established trails. Mountain lions have been sighted in the park; check at the entrance station for the latest lion information.
- **Pets**—All pets must be in a tent or vehicle during the night and in the immediate control of the owner at all times. During the day pets must be on a leash no longer than six feet. They are not permitted on trails or on the beach in San Simeon State Park. The boardwalk on Moonstone Beach Drive is open to pets on leashes.
- **Park resources**—All features of the park—plants (including dead wood), rocks and all wildlife—are protected and must not be removed, injured, destroyed or disturbed in any way. During summer months reptiles are a common sight—do not harm them. Simply walk around them.



*Great  
horned owl*

- **Tide pools**—These are especially sensitive areas; please watch where you step. Animals, shells and plants must not be removed from their marine environment. Handle marine animals gently, and put them back exactly where you found them. Report sick marine mammals or birds to a ranger.
- **Recycling**—Park staff encourage visitors to recycle. Deposit empty aluminum cans and recyclable glass bottles in the recycle bins near the dumpster, across from the campfire center.
- **Fires**—Fires are not allowed on the beach—they are permitted only in the fire ring provided at each campsite. Fire hazard is extremely high during the summer season—never leave a fire unattended.

- **Quiet times**—Peace and quiet must be maintained after 10:00 p.m. Electric generators and motors may be operated only between 10:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.
- **Showers**—Pay showers are only available for campers registered in San Simeon Creek Campground. Washburn campers may not use the showers.
- **Roller Skates**—Skateboards, scooters and rollerblades are allowed on flat roadways. Coasting down steep slopes within the park is not permitted.
- **Rockhounding**—Rock collecting is permitted on state park beaches, but limits are 15 pounds per person per day. Do not disturb the nesting habitat of snowy plovers.
- **Driftwood**—Driftwood collecting is permitted in the park. Limit is 50 pounds per person per day, and collecting must be done by hand (no chainsaws).
- **Bicycles**—Bicycle helmets are required for riders under the age of 18. To help slow the rate of erosion on trails, bicycles are not allowed on any trails in San Simeon State Park.
- **Vehicles**—Campground parking is restricted to designated sites only. Wheels must be on the pavement in San Simeon and on the gravel in Washburn Campground. Ask park staff about additional parking if needed.